

Muir A (1994) Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland Community. Flora & Fauna Guarantee Action Statement 53. Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Melbourne.
 O'Shea M and Hocking C (1997) Field trials of alternative detection techniques for the Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*), at the Albion Explosives Factory Site. Unpublished report to the Striped Legless Lizard (Victorian) Working Group.
 Osmond H (1994) Habitat specialisation and isolation of remnant populations of the Striped Legless Lizard

Delma impar. Report to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service Wildlife Research Unit and the Australian National University, Canberra.
 Rohr DH and Peterson GNL (2003) The Striped Legless Lizard in the Western District of Victoria: New Insights. Technical Report to the Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority. Ecology Research Group, RMIT University: Melbourne.

Received 15 March 2007; accepted 3 May 2007

Regardfully Yours: Selected Correspondence of Ferdinand von Mueller Volume III: 1876-1896

edited by RW Home, AM Lucas, Sara Maroske, DM Sinkora,
 JH Voight and Monika Wells

Publisher: Peter Lang, Bern, 2006. 909 pages, 21 illustrations, hardback
 ISBN 3-906757-10-2. RRP US\$62.95
 (\$215 in the Royal Botanic Gardens bookshop)

Here is the volume of Mueller's correspondence that includes references to the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV). This third and final volume spans the last two decades of Mueller's life, when he was 50 to 71 years old, and the first sixteen years of the FNCV's existence. During this period, Baron Ferdinand von Mueller was still Victoria's Government Botanist (in the Chief Secretary's Department) but no longer Director of Melbourne's Botanic Garden, and continued to document the Australian flora and enlarge and curate the government herbarium, and to speak and write prolifically on all matters botanical. Since the Baron was an honoured member and patron of the FNCV, it is not surprising that the pages of Volume III provide early glimpses of the Club – thirteen mentions in the index. Mueller's huge bibliography in Volume I includes his papers in *The Victorian Naturalist*. You can find information about Mueller and the project which has spawned three volumes of his selected correspondence in my review of the first two volumes in *The Victorian Naturalist* 122 (2), 2005.

One of my reasons for being a tad tardy in reviewing this volume is that it is so useful. I've been delving into the three volumes for several projects – Mueller's continuing interest in the acclimatisation of foreign plants, his contributions to international exhibitions, and his interactions with

Frederick McCoy, the professor of natural science at the University of Melbourne.

Some of the 326 letters and documents in Volume III show how Mueller continued to use his correspondence to complain bitterly at losing (in 1873) that essential adjunct to his position as Government Botanist – the Botanic Garden. Without it he could not test the cultivation of indigenous and foreign plants. And without the laboratory in the adjacent Domain, he could not have plant products prepared to showcase the Colony's botanical resources in museums and at local and international exhibitions. To add insult to injury, his successor, the Garden's curator, William Guilfoyle, sent timber and other exhibits from trees Mueller had had planted in the Botanic Garden. Mueller fumed (in German) that a quite uneducated gardener, who simply copies the Sydney flower garden ... can not only daily give himself airs before the public with my treasures, with the help of the assistants schooled for years by me, he can send things for the exhibitions from my plants [pp. 174-5 translation].

Mueller also complained to Joseph Hooker, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in England,

I am daily hampered for forest-investigations, for which I want the rich collection of living trees, established by me in the bot

Garden, including numerous species of Eucalypts [p. 157].

But, despite his humiliating and disruptive loss, Mueller continued to speak and write to press for forest conservation and to publicise (locally and internationally) the usefulness of indigenous and introduced plants, all the while continuing his taxonomic and herbarium work in the cramped Botanical Museum in the Government House Domain adjacent to the Botanic Garden.

Mueller claimed that his long-contemplated descriptive *Eucalyptus Atlas* would help to develop Victoria's forest resources. His *Eucalyptographia. A Descriptive Atlas of the Eucalypts of Australia* (1879-84) was based mainly on his earlier observations, when he had access to 'his' rich collection of eucalypts in the Botanic Garden. His preparation of *Eucalyptographia* was interrupted in 1880 by his return to the international stage of exhibitions – as commissioner and judge at the International Exhibition in Melbourne's new Exhibition Building in Carlton. His correspondence also mentions his participation in subsequent international exhibitions – in Amsterdam in 1883, Calcutta in 1883-84, London in 1886 and Melbourne in 1888. Mueller's exhibits included specimens of Australian timber, eucalyptus oil and other forest products, and his *Eucalyptographia, Key to the system of Victorian plants, Systematic census of Australian plants, Select extra-tropical plants, readily eligible for industrial culture or naturalization* and other publications.

Like *Eucalyptographia*, Mueller's *Select extra-tropical plants* was based initially on information he had gained, by 1873, from the cultivation of a huge diversity of plants in Melbourne's Botanic Garden, and later enriched with information from helpful correspondents. Mueller's successful request, penned in June 1876, for ministerial approval for the publication of his earlier work on indigenous and introduced plants suitable for cultivation in Victoria resulted in the publication of his 293-page book, *Select plants readily eligible for industrial culture or naturalisation in Victoria, with indications of their native countries and some of their uses* (1876). Since the information on useful plants was relevant to other temperate parts of the world, Mueller, ever the botanical publi-

cist, removed 'Victoria' from the title, added 'extra-tropical', and edited and enlarged *Select extra-tropical plants, readily eligible for industrial culture or naturalization* for NSW, Indian, American, German, French and Victorian editions. The Indian edition was printed in Calcutta for the international exhibition there in 1883-84. Mueller's letters are peppered with references to information contained in his *Select extra-tropical plants* and occasional requests for information for inclusion in future editions of this extremely popular compendium of useful information. The 466-page 1885 Victorian edition was sold out in seven months.

The FNCV was useful to Mueller. From 1884 its new journal, *The Victorian Naturalist*, provided a convenient vehicle for his taxonomic and other papers; and the publication of his *Key to the system of Victorian plants* was suggested at a Club meeting. In his FNCV presidential address in 1884, Dr Frank Stanley Dobson suggested that a Victorian equivalent of the dichotomous key in the Rev Spicer's *Handbook of the plants of Tasmania* be prepared under the Baron's supervision. The following extracts provide illuminating glimpses of the young FNCV. Several are from letters in the Club's Archives.

As you may know, the Baron accepted the position of FNCV patron but not president. In May 1883 Mueller wrote,

My health has been fluctuating for some years, so that with much regret I was obliged to beg of the Field Naturalists Club ... to confer the honor of President on another Gentleman than myself [p. 323].

In May 1886 he wrote to the Club's honorary secretary, Francis Barnard,

to express my deep appreciation of the generosity of the great Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, for having raised me to one of its Patronships. Among the many marks of distinction, with which I have been honored in life, I value this one as among the highest, because it is a tribute from that country, in which I spent most of my years and with which my labours are most directly identified. To me it is in connection with this new dignity also a highly pleasurable thought, that work, which I commenced in Australia nearly 40 years ago, will in various directions be carried on by young workers, whom

I met personally at your meetings, and who can be guided and can be encouraged by what was accomplished at my time; while they in their turn far on in the next century can inspire a younger generation, thus linking one century's scientific work to that of another! [p. 433].

Mueller's two-volume *Key to the system of Victorian plants* was a recurring topic in his correspondence. In August 1886, in response to a letter in Melbourne's *Argus* newspaper, criticising the recently published illustrated volume of the *Key*, Mueller wrote a long letter to his minister, the Chief Secretary, Alfred Deakin, offering 'some explanatory remarks on the supposed shortcomings of this work, as it is a Government's publication' [p. 440]. Mueller justified his inclusion of expensive illustrations from woodblocks, acknowledged the unfortunate presence of some errors, and pointed out that the *Key* was not aimed at state schools,

but more particularly for the Field Naturalists Club, and somewhat against my own opinion as to the plan, – the dichotomous method, – adopted by the late meritorious Revd Mr. Spicer for the flora of Tasmania [p. 443].

The difficult volume with the dichotomous key and diagnostic descriptions of species took much longer. Devising a dichotomous key without interrupting the affinities reflected in the taxonomic system challenged Mueller's wisdom and patience, and his exacting preparations consumed much more time than he had anticipated, irritatingly interrupting and delaying many other projects and duties. It proved so time-taking beyond all calculation, that I shall only be able to finish it in June or July [1887]; – and as for the early issue of it a demand was made in the Parliament here [p. 467].

A footnote explains that, in July 1886 (two years after his FNCV presidential suggestion), the lawyer-politician FS Dobson had asked in the Legislative Council when the *Key* would be published. In September 1887 Mueller noted that

the Field Naturalists here press me for the "Key to the Syst of Vict. Plants" for use still this spring, and altho' the printing *has* commenced, the work cannot appear for some weeks yet' [p. 474];

and in October that

I had no idea that the dichotomous method, demanded for the "Key to the system of Victorian plants", would take up so very much more time, than I estimated I hope however to finish the "Key" at last next month; and working on Papuan plants will then be my main-engagement in all hours which can be rendered free from urgent official duties [pp. 478-9].

According to Mueller's bibliography in Volume I of *Regardsfully Yours*, evidence in *The Victorian Naturalist* indicates that the descriptive, dichotomous volume of his *Key* was published toward the end of 1888. It was dedicated to the Chief Secretary, Alfred Deakin.

In 1889, on learning 'that some members are eager, to get the name changed of the Field-Naturalists Club', Patron Mueller advised the FNCV President, Arthur Lucas, that such a change *not* be made... The very word "Club" implies an union without rigorous ceremonies, a freer coming together, than in abstract science-societies, as evinced also by the membership of our Field-Naturalists Club being happily open to Ladies. By the change of the name, as far as I can see, nothing would be gained for our particular work, while much to us in our free scientific intercourse and in our unrestrained field-operations might be lost. I further have heard, that some members of the Club are anxious to establish *grades* in our union, according to greater or lesser accomplishments and experiences. This proposition came up formerly in more than one science-society of Australia, but I gave my advice against such a measure fully thirty years ago [p. 539].

During the FNCV's protracted efforts to have Wilson's Promontory reserved as a national park, Mueller wrote to Francis Barnard, regretting his inability to attend a Club meeting in April 1890 [p. 552];

I feel honored with being made a member of the Committee of the Field-Naturalists Club for preservation (in apt localities) of the indigenous vegetation and marsupials as well as various birds. I have however held from the commencement of this movement, that we could not possibly induce the Government, to cede so large an area for that purpose as the whole of Wilson's promontory; the distance from the metropolis would also be too great for the multitude of the

people, to derive an adequate advantage from such reservations. In my opinion our *first attention* should now be given, that not all the most picturesque vallies get defaced and alienated from the crown. Thus an application might be made to the hon the Minister of Lands *at once* for withdrawing from selection the best of the *Waratah-Vallies* in Eastern Gippsland, also all places in which large cataracts or cascades exist.

Prof [Baldwin] Spencer and his companions of the [FNCV's] E. Gippsland-tour, made a year ago, would be able to describe these vallies and cascades as regards *precise localities*, so that the district-surveyors might become instructed, to keep these glorious spots intact, and perhaps some arrangements might be made thus far also, to prevent shooting in these reserved localities. Places at Mt Baw Baw, the Buffalo-Ranges and towards Cape Otway might also be protected.

Respectfully your
Ferd von Mueller

The month before he died, Mueller wrote advising Thomas Stephen Hart, at the Ballarat School of Mines, 'to start at once a Field-Naturalists Club' [p. 746] in prosperous Ballarat, and requesting plant specimens for his preparation of the proposed third edition of his *Systematic census of Australian plants* (which was never published).

I gave it as my opinion, when addressing the Field-Nat Club here at its last annual gathering that every town throughout Australia ought to have some such Association' [p. 748].

The FNCV was among the many contributors of flowers to Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller's funeral on Wednesday, 13th October 1896, at the St Kilda Cemetery.

The correspondence in this volume shows that, during the last two decades of his life, Mueller continued to document Australian plants and expand Victoria's herbarium into THE reference collection of Australian, not just Victorian, plants – with specimens from his huge network of collectors across Australia and the government's rare purchase of herbaria rich in authenticated specimens of Australian species. Meanwhile he pressed for conservation reserves, supported exploratory expeditions in inland Australia, Antarctica and New Guinea and contributed to vari-

ous government inquiries, scientific and geographic societies, museums and exhibitions. And all the while he was writing, writing, writing – articles and books, as well as letters. Mueller's documentation of the Australian flora deservedly earned him an international reputation, and, as his published correspondence reveals, his correspondents included respected botanists across the European-controlled world – a veritable who's who of late nineteenth century botany.

As in the first two volumes, letters were selected on the basis of their scientific importance and their relevance to Mueller's life and work, and to show the wide range of his correspondents and the subjects discussed. I agree with the editors that

the letters selected shed fascinating light on the final two decades of the extraordinary career of an extraordinary man, as well as, more generally, on the cultural and intellectual history of Australia at a crucial stage of its development and on the history of the field sciences in the final years of the nineteenth century [p 45],

which of course includes the activities of the FNCV.

As well as the selected correspondence, Volume III of *Respectfully Yours* includes a substantial introduction, a biographical register of Mueller's correspondents, including Barnard, Lucas, Hart and other FNCV members (Appendix A), a list of Mueller's orders, offices, affiliations and honours (Appendix B), a bibliography of publications cited in footnotes, an index of botanical names and a general index.

Substantial indexes in all three volumes provide pointers to rich lodes of botanical and other information, but imagine what you will be able to find and follow on the future CD-ROM of the complete (known) correspondence, especially in conjunction with Mueller's biography, which is also keenly awaited. If you share my interest in nineteenth century Australian botanical history, check that your local library has the three volumes of *Respectfully Yours*, or beg, borrow or buy them.

Linden Gillbank

School of Social and Environmental Enquiry
The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010
Email: lindenrg@unimelb.edu.au